

POLICY DISCUSSION: Municipal Waste Recycling Bill

BACKGROUND: Joan Ruddock MP, recently published her Municipal Waste Recycling Bill, with the support of members of the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Plaid Cymru parties. In a change from the first draft (which aimed to require authorities to collect specific materials this latest draft of the Bill calls for DEFRA to ensure that 50 per cent of municipal waste generated in the United Kingdom is recycled or composted by the end of 2010. It also requires each waste disposal authority and waste collection authority to publish a sustainable waste strategy within one year of the Act coming into force. Waste disposal authorities will also be called upon to publish statistics relating to the volume of waste collected, composted and recycled, as well as the number and percentage of homes in their area for which there is a separate collection of recyclable waste. Finally the Bill also claims to ensure that an addition is made to the content of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, calling for each waste collection authority to collect waste in a manner which will facilitate reprocessing or recycling by the WDA, a power of direction.

AFFECTED LA PARTIES: English and Welsh authorities only.

TIMETABLE: The Bill received a full second reading in the House of Commons on Friday 14th March. There was a good deal of support from all parties in the House. Michael Meacher closed the debate by offering a cautious support for the Bill "We have sympathy with the Bill's aims, but I emphasize that a number of amendments have to be made in Committee if the Bill is to secure the Government's support. On that basis, I am content, perhaps I should say pleased, to allow the Bill to proceed to Committee". So the Bill will now proceed through a Standing Committee of the House of Commons before entering the Lords.

ISSUES: Adoption of the Bill would mean that the secretary of State (SoS) would need to set revised performance standards for local authorities and set out on a national (England and Wales separately?) any new policies needed to ensure that the 50% target is achieved. The Bill puts a burden on LAs with the requirement to produce a strategy within one year of publication, possible duplication of joint municipal waste strategies? Concern over specific wording of the Bill that says that the strategy mentioned above should set out policies to "enable all householders to dispose of waste sustainably, with specific reference to the provision of services at or near home". Is this a compulsion to provide kerbside?

LARAC STANCE: LARAC should:

- Welcome the Bill as a useful means of engaging the Houses of Parliament in debate on waste minimization and recycling issues
- Sound a note of caution with regard to the 50% target by 2010 given current local authority finances and infrastructure (Adrian can provide good evidence of this)
- Not welcome any element of the Bill that will **require** LAs to provide recycling services in a prescriptive fashion
- Not welcome any duplication that the Bill might require with regard to local authority joint waste strategies
- Make no comment on section 48(1) as amended in the Bill to give WDAs a power of direction over WCAs with regard to how waste is collected
- Continue to 'support' Joan Ruddock MP with factual and evidence-based opinion on the likely consequences of the Bill and any future amendments